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Resistance to AI Adoption in HRM: A Qualitative Study of Pakistani Organizations

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Abstract
The fast integration process of artificial intelligence into human resource management (HRM) practices has led to strong discussions about the ability of organizations in developing countries to accept these new changes. Pakistani organizations display strong refusal to adopt AI-driven HRM tools which organizations recognize have potential to enhance their recruitment process and performance evaluation and employee engagement and workforce analytics. This qualitative study investigates the nature and sources and organizational consequences of this resistance which exists within Pakistani firms across multiple industries. The study followed an interpretivist research paradigm through its semi-structured interviews which included fifteen HR professionals and senior managers and organizational decision-makers from organizations based in Lahore and Karachi and Islamabad. Thematic analysis was applied to uncover recurring patterns and deeper contextual explanations for adoption resistance. The research identified that resistance arises primarily from HR personnel who fear losing their jobs and employees and executives who lack AI skills and digital abilities and people who distrust algorithmic systems and organizations that maintain static hierarchical structures and companies that lack basic technological infrastructure and organizations that view AI technology as unsuitable for their HR methods. The study concludes the multi-pronged strategy which includes targeted digital upskilling and transparent communication about AI's complementary role and leadership-driven change advocacy and culturally-sensitive implementation frameworks serves as the required solution to overcome AI adoption resistance which exists within Pakistani HRM. Theoretical contributions include a context-specific model of AI-HRM adoption resistance while practical implications guide HR practitioners and policymakers who seek to prepare their organizations for AI-driven transformation.

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
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Keywords: AI adoption, HRM resistance, Pakistan, qualitative research, digital transformation, organizational change

1. Introduction

The introduction of AI technologies has spread across the globe to change all business processes which include human resource management in organizations. The HRM function encounters escalating technological disruption through AI-based recruitment systems and automatic CV screening technologies and employee engagement monitoring systems which track workforce sentiment (Tambe, Cappelli & Yakubovich, 2019; Votto, Valecha, Najaflou & Rao, 2021; Nawaz et al., 2024; Arunachalam, Pathi & Gajenderan, 2024). The advanced economies of developed nations enable organizations to decrease their administrative duties while achieving improved hiring results and creating workforce forecasts for upcoming years. Organizations in Pakistan show two distinct patterns of HRM AI usage which occur because their companies reject AI implementation but they implement AI technologies at a lower rate (Ekuma, 2024; Shaikh, Sohu, Shaikh, Kherazi & Soomro, 2025).

Pakistan provides an exciting but insufficiently researched environment which researchers can use to study how organizations adopt AI technology for their HRM functions. The HR operations system in Pakistan requires companies to enhance their systems because they face rising competition from banking and telecommunications and manufacturing companies (Ahmed & Siddiqui, 2020). Organizations face major challenges when integrating AI because their fundamental digital infrastructure remains absent and their staff members lack necessary competencies which, under their organizations' strict hierarchical structures, prevent them from developing needed abilities. The National AI Policy 2025 of Pakistan identifies these barriers to AI introduction because only 10 percent of the existing IT workforce has the essential skills for AI according to research for HRM AI integration at organizations (Atta & Khan, 2025). HR professionals and organizational leaders may resist systems which they see as eliminating personal connections while being difficult to understand and lacking cultural compatibility with their work environment according to three cultural dimensions which include high power distance and uncertainty avoidance and collectivist orientations (Hofstede, 2001).

The resistance organizations experience against adopting AI technology represents a complex problem which goes beyond simple technology rejection by individual employees. Golgeci et al., (2025) developed a process framework which demonstrates how employees at workplaces experience AI resistance through three main elements. The cognitive threat assessment process required for identity protection and organizational barriers needs specific organizational solutions to reach successful resolution. Bandara, (2025) demonstrates that AI-based HRM systems with embedded algorithmic bias create trust issues with employees and damage their belief in fair organizational practices, which leads to resistance by workers who possess digital skills. The Technology Acceptance Model TAM shows that people decide to adopt technology based on their assessment of its usefulness and ease of operation (Davis, 1989). The institutional theory explains how firms restrict their innovation adoption through

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

isomorphic pressures which force them to adopt similar practices as others in their field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The testing of these models in the West leaves a major loophole that fails to explain the reasons for AI resistance in Pakistani organizations where culture and resource constraints differ from the West.

The barriers which stop organizations from adopting AI-HRM systems include psychological factors and organizational cultural traits plus structural elements and technical components. The researchers of Madanchian and Taherdoost (2025) identified three main barriers which HRM systems face when organizations attempt to adopt AI technology. The researchers found that digital leadership strengths plus culturally relevant implementation methods lead to organizational success in AI adoption. Kelan (2024) indicated that how AI recruitment algorithms, which received training through Western labor market data, create biased outcomes in their hiring processes.

The development of generative AI technology in HRM requires organizations to establish risk management systems before they should start their AI-HRM full implementation process (Jiang, 2025). The research shows various resistance elements which particularly impact Pakistani organizations but exist as unexplored areas in current academic research.

This research explores how firms in Pakistan reject AI by providing an extensive analysis of qualitative studies on AI technology rejection. The study uses existing AI workplace resistance research from (Golgeci et al., 2025) and (Ekuma, 2024) along with the actual organizational data from (Shaikh et al., 2025) analyzed that how psychological, cultural, structural and technological factors create resistance against AI-HRM integration. This research study brings theoretical and practical value to AI research which focuses on HRM and organizational change management processes in developing country organizations.

Problem Statement

The worldwide excitement about AI-powered HRM systems has increased but Pakistani organizations still use these technologies at extremely low levels. The organizations currently use manual HR processes which depend on staff judgment while they maintain doubts about AI-powered systems. The organization encounters multiple barriers which extend beyond financial and technical issues because staff members need to investigate the hidden organizational and cultural and psychological obstacles, The current literature fails to explain the reasons Pakistani HR professionals and organizational leaders fight against AI adoption, The specific resistance reasons and the organizational factors which sustain this pattern remain unknown, The knowledge gap must be closed to enable development of effective AI implementation strategies, which will meet the specific requirements of Pakistani organizational environments.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- To determine the principal causes and types of resistance to AI-HRM implementation in the organizations of Pakistan.

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

- To analyze the impact of the organizational culture, leadership style and the attitude of workers toward AI-HRM implementation.
- To examine structural and technological obstacles that contribute to the process of resistance against AI-based HRM.
- To develop a more contextual understanding of approaches that could reduce any form of resistance and aid the integration of AI-HRM.

1.4 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- Why do HR practitioners and managers in Pakistan organizations show resistance to adopting AI technology in their HRM systems?
- How do organizational culture and leadership impact their attitude toward AI implementation in the field of HRM?
- Which structural and technological obstacles may arise during the process of AI-HRM implementation in Pakistan?
- Which strategies are suitable for overcoming the described barriers?

2. Literature Review

AI in Human Resource Management

Artificial intelligence has transformed human resource management as organizations use it to automate their daily tasks while improving their decision-making process and acquiring useful business intelligence from their employee data (Cheng & Hackett, 2021). AI applications in HRM span the full employee lifecycle, encompassing AI-assisted recruitment and applicant tracking, automated onboarding, natural language processing (NLP)-driven performance reviews, predictive attrition analytics, and intelligent learning management systems (Nawaz et al., 2024). The tools provide benefits that include human bias reduction in talent decisions and improved operational efficiency and they allow HR professionals to concentrate on strategic activities which generate value for the organization.

The implementation of AI technology within human resource management systems presents various hurdles for organizations to overcome. The adoption of AI technology in HR operations faces ethical and operational hazards which include algorithmic bias and data privacy issues and the risk of strengthening current social inequalities and the replacement of human judgment in hiring processes (Köchling & Wehner, 2020). The success of AI-HRM tools depends on three factors which include the data quality used for analysis and the ability to understand model results and the organization's capacity to implement AI-based suggestions. Developing economies face this challenge because their organizations lack mature data governance structures which leads to operational issues with AI systems.

Technology Adoption and Resistance in Organizations

The study of technology adoption has generated a rich theoretical tradition. The Technology Acceptance Model (1989) states that people will accept technology based on their perception of its usefulness and its ease of use. TAM2 and UTAUT were later developed to include social influence and facilitating conditions and hedonic motivation as additional predictors of technology adoption (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

The models have been used extensively to research organization technology adoption yet critics have pointed out their focus on adoption intent rather than actual use and their failure to address resistance behaviors. Technology adoption resistance encompasses both active and passive responses which people exhibit when their established routines and power structures face danger from change (Lapointe & Rivard, 2005). In organizational contexts, resistance may manifest as avoidance, passive non-compliance, active opposition, or subversive workarounds. Organizations tend to resist change through their established processes because they maintain their current operations which leads to organizational inertia (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985). Organizations that operate in environments with high uncertainty avoidance and high power distance are more likely to resist technologies which create opacity and shift power and break established authority frameworks according to cultural factors which control technology resistance.

AI Adoption in Developing Economy HRM Contexts

Several research studies about AI implementation in HRM fields have taken place during Western organizational environments which maintain strong digital systems and high human capital abilities and their institutional frameworks. Research from emerging markets demonstrates three major types of challenges which include limited infrastructure development and insufficient workforce skills and inadequate funding and digital testing environments which research institutions maintain at lower levels. South Asian countries face difficulties because their cultural norms establish trust in human assessment methods which work better than algorithmic solutions and their senior members of society hold authority to control technology purchasing decisions and because of their strong fears about losing their jobs which create obstacles to adopting new technologies.

The situation which Pakistani organizations face presents them with complicated challenges. Digital services and fintech industries have achieved rapid expansion but most formal organizations continue to use traditional HR methods which rely on paper documents and basic HR information systems to handle their HR operations (Ahmed & Siddiqui, 2020). HR professionals express their worries about AI-driven performance management systems and automated recruitment processes because these systems will impact their career paths and corporate fairness and the security of all collected information. The existing research about these issues needs more primary empirical research to study the HRM situation in Pakistan which requires additional research.

AI-HRM Adoption Resistance

The research study uses institutional theory together with technology resistance model and cultural dimensions' theory to create a framework that explains why Pakistani HRM professionals resist AI technology. The institutional theory describes how organizations adopt new technologies through three types of pressures which include coercive and normative and mimetic forces. Pakistan's HR professional community establishes normative pressures which work together with regulatory authorities' coercive forces to either support or block AI implementation according to existing institutional frameworks (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The technology resistance model developed by Ram and Sheth (1989), defines two main sources of resistance which

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

include functional barriers and psychological barriers. This research identifies the need for the formation of three levels of resistance for the development of resistance to the use of AI-HRM in Pakistan: the psychological level of barriers at the individual level, the structural level of barriers at the organizational level, and the environmental level of barriers at the institutional level, including regulation uncertainties and professional standards. It is critical to have knowledge about how obstacles interact and form more powerful barriers in designing the strategy.

3. Methodology

Research Approach

The research study utilizes a qualitative research method which operates under the interpretive research framework. The research problem requires qualitative methods because complex social phenomena need to be studied through their meaning and perception and contextual factors which are essential for understanding the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study of AI resistance in HRM requires qualitative research because this research needs to show psychological and cultural and organizational factors which cannot be measured with quantitative methods. The study uses HR professionals and organizational leaders from banking and manufacturing and telecommunications and pharmaceuticals and e-commerce and technology services sectors as the main research method to understand and explain resistance.

Research Design

The research study used an interpretivist research design which recognized that organizations create their realities through social interactions and that participants' personal views about AI technology are equally important to studying AI adoption than actual implementation data. People create their own meanings about technology and their work roles and methods of change implementation through their cultural background and professional identity and their organizational experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The Pakistani organizational situation requires this particular method because social customs and workplace structure and identity factors determine how people should act in their jobs. The study used semi-structured interviews as its main data collection method which enabled researchers to explore main research topics while giving participants the chance to talk about their thoughts and experiences beyond the interview questions. The study generated comprehensive narratives that described organizational experiences with AI and the factors that led to resistance and the assessment of adoption feasibility. The interviews lasted between 45 and 70 minutes and took place through face-to-face meetings with whom participants had given authorization to record the interview. The interviewers had transcribed the interviews word-for-word and then conducted member checks to confirm the transcription's accuracy.

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

4. Data Analysis

The study analyzes how 15 Pakistani organizations from banking, manufacturing, telecommunications and pharmaceuticals sectors resist AI technology in their human resource management practices. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with HR professionals and senior managers and digital transformation officers to obtain a complete range of organizational viewpoints. The researchers used thematic analysis to examine the study results which revealed resistance patterns and resistance patterns along with the factors that influenced AI technology implementation in different contexts.

Demographic Information of Respondents

The study used diverse respondents to achieve its purpose because technical implementers and human-facing HR practitioners bring different organizational perspectives. The study included participants who worked at various levels from entry-level HR associates to Senior Human Resource Managers to create different AI decision-making experiences. Table 4.1 provides a summary of participant roles and organizational contexts.

Table 4.1

Respondent	Role/Designation	Sector
R1	HR Manager	Banking
R2	HR Manager	Telecommunications
R3	Digital Transformation Lead	Manufacturing
R4	Senior HR Business Partner	Pharmaceuticals
R5	Recruitment Specialist	Banking
R6	HR Information Systems Manager	Telecommunications
R7	Organizational Development Manager	Pharmaceuticals
R8	HR Analytics Officer	Technology Services
R9	Talent Acquisition Manager	Banking
R10	HR Generalist	Manufacturing
R11	Deputy Director HR	Telecommunications
R12	People Operations Lead	E-commerce
R13	Learning & Development Manager	Telecom
R14	HR Associate	Banking
R15	Chief People Officer	Technology Services

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

Stages of Thematic Analysis

The study used the six-phase thematic analysis framework from Nowell et al., (2017) which extends the Braun and Clarke (2006) framework by placing trustworthiness criteria at every analytic stage.

The framework consists of six phases which follow a sequential pattern while allowing for iterative progress through the research process:

- familiarizing yourself with the data
- generating initial codes
- searching for themes
- reviewing themes
- defining and naming themes
- producing the report

Nowell et al. (2017) state that thematic analysis requires researchers to establish credibility transferability dependability and confirmability throughout all study phases while the researchers established trustworthiness through their methods of extended transcript analysis and peer debriefing and reflexive journaling and their complete audit trail.

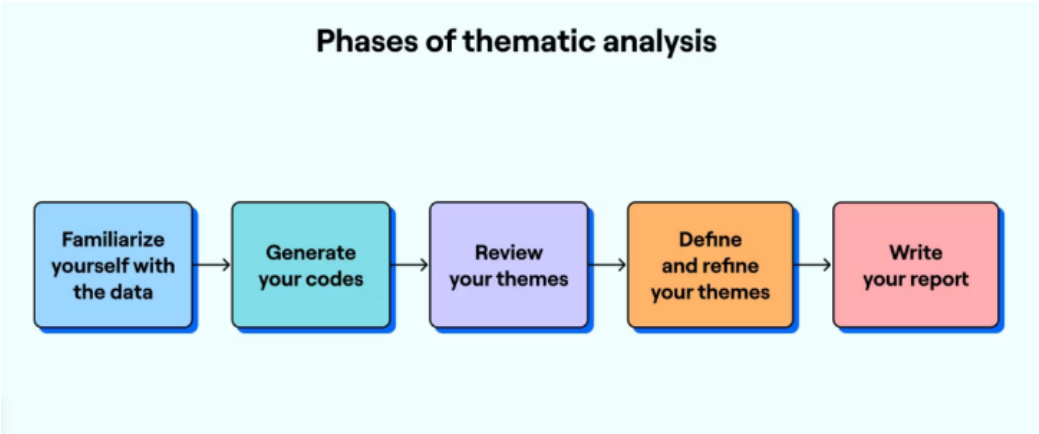

Figure 4.1: Phases of Thematic Analysis (Nowell et al., 2017)

Thematic Analysis

Question 1: How do you perceive the role of AI in human resource management, and what are your initial reactions to its adoption in your organization?

Table 4.3: Theme 1: Fear of Job Displacement and Professional Redundancy

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

Respondents (Phase 1: Familiarization)	Initial Code (Phase 2: Generating Codes)	Authentic Data Extract (Phase 2: Raw Data)	Re-Coded As (Phases 3–4: Searching & Reviewing)	Final Theme (Phase 5: Defining & Naming)
R1, R5, R9	Displacement anxiety	"If AI sifts through all CVs and forecasts who will be hired, It seems like we are becoming obsolete."	Existential threat to HR role	Fear of Job Displacement and Professional Redundancy
R3, R7, R12	Identity threat	"My knowledge has taken fifteen years to build. AI does not comprehend the human side of talent selection."	Professional identity protection	
R10, R14	Competitive fear	"The young HR professionals are the ones who fear the most. AI seems to snatch away their career pathway even before they begin."	Career progression anxiety	
R2, R8	Selective acceptance	"For administrative duties, I think AI is okay, but for recruitment and promotion? I	Bounded role acceptance	

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

Respondents (Phase 1: Familiarization)	Initial Code (Phase 2: Generating Codes)	Authentic Data Extract (Phase 2: Raw Data)	Re-Coded As (Phases 3–4: Searching & Reviewing)	Final Theme (Phase 5: Defining & Naming)
		don't think it should happen."		

Results

The majority of participants expressed their strongest emotional response toward job loss as their primary reason for opposing the study. The researchers found that study participants used emotional expressions through words like 'replaced' and 'obsolete' and 'irrelevant' which they repeated throughout the study to identify displacement as an important topic. The open coding process which occurred during Phase 2 discovered four separate types of experience which included existential anxiety about role survival and professional identity protection rooted in experience and expertise and career progression anxiety among junior staff and bounded acceptance which allowed participants to use AI for routine tasks but prevented them from using it in high-stakes HR decisions. The theme review process during Phase 4 proved that these codes shared strong internal uniformity while providing distinct evidence to separate them from the distrust theme. The final theme defines itself through Fear of Job Displacement and Professional Redundancy because it demonstrates how Pakistani HRM workers resist AI adoption because they believe it threatens their professional identity and career stability throughout different organizational levels.

Question 2: What concerns do you have about the reliability and fairness of AI-powered HR decisions?

Table 4.4: Theme 2: Distrust of Algorithmic Decision-Making

Respondents (Phase 1: Familiarization)	Initial Code (Phase 2: Generating Codes)	Authentic Data Extract (Phase 2: Raw Data)	Re-Coded As (Phases 3–4: Searching & Reviewing)	Final Theme (Phase 5: Defining & Naming)
R4, R6, R11	Algorithmic opacity	"We have no idea how the AI arrives at its decisions. It's a black	Lack of transparency	Distrust of Algorithmic Decision-Making

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

Respondents (Phase 1: Familiarization)	Initial Code (Phase 2: Generating Codes)	Authentic Data Extract (Phase 2: Raw Data)	Re-Coded As (Phases 3–4: Searching & Reviewing)	Final Theme (Phase 5: Defining & Naming)
		box. How do we explain that to our employees?"		
R1, R9, R15	Bias concerns	"The AI trained on Western data doesn't understand our context. The AI will discriminate without realizing it."	Contextual misalignment	
R7, R13	Accountability gap	"If the AI makes an incorrect decision in hiring, who is held accountable for it? HR can't use a machine as an excuse."	Responsibility ambiguity	
R5, R12	Ethical discomfort	"Monitoring employee sentiments with AI seems invasive and unethical."	Privacy and dignity concerns	

Results

The second major theme of the study emerged from participants' distrust of algorithmic decision-making which showed itself through their experience with transparency and

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

bias and accountability and their ethical discomfort. Participants showed strong disbelief towards AI systems which function as "black boxes" because they produce recommendations without understandable justifications that HR professionals can share with workers and managers and legal experts. The respondents who took part in the study showed strong concerns about algorithmic bias because they doubted the suitability of AI models which used Western datasets to operate within Pakistani labor markets where cultural and linguistic and socioeconomic differences exist. The HR professionals developed distrust of AI systems because they lacked direct responsibility for results which they could neither control nor comprehend.

Question 3: How does your organization's culture and leadership approach influence attitudes toward AI in HR?

Table 4.5: Theme 3: Hierarchical Culture and Leadership Ambivalence

Respondents (Phase 1: Familiarization)	Initial Code (Phase 2: Generating Codes)	Authentic Data Extract (Phase 2: Raw Data)	Re-Coded As (Phases 3–4: Searching & Reviewing)	Final Theme (Phase 5: Defining & Naming)
R2, R8, R15	Top-down inertia	"The CEO is theoretically interested in AI but doesn't want to try something new without someone else doing it first. Everyone is holding back until one organization takes the initiative."	Leadership risk aversion	Hierarchical Culture and Leadership Ambivalence
R3, R10, R14	Cultural conservatism	"Where the top management doesn't buy into an idea, nothing happens in Pakistani organizations. And AI isn't a	Authority-dependent adoption	

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

Respondents (Phase 1: Familiarization)	Initial Code (Phase 2: Generating Codes)	Authentic Data Extract (Phase 2: Raw Data)	Re-Coded As (Phases 3–4: Searching & Reviewing)	Final Theme (Phase 5: Defining & Naming)
		very convincing idea to the boss."		
R6, R11	Change fatigue	"We have been through so many failed change initiatives that people don't believe anything anymore."	Organizational cynicism	
R4, R13	Peer conformity pressure	"Other companies are not even trying AI yet; so we think there's no need for us to try it now."	Isomorphic inertia	

Results

The adoption of AI technology faced strong resistance because organizational culture and leadership dynamics created essential contextual elements that determined whether implementation would succeed. The familiarization phase showed a major structural pattern when personnel kept mentioning authority while they waited for permissions and their change efforts failed to achieve results. The Open coding process in Phase 2 created four codes which included leadership risk aversion authority-dependent adoption organizational cynicism and isomorphic inertia. The theme-searching phase produced a pattern which showed that hierarchical organizational structures and cautious leadership behaviors work together to create an atmosphere which prevents AI progress. The Phase 4 peer review process showed that this theme had separate analytical characteristics which differed from the technical barriers theme. The final theme Hierarchical Culture and Leadership Ambivalence shows that Pakistani organizations need senior leadership approval for AI-HRM implementation while

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

organizations without such approval will experience permanent organizational inertia which individual enthusiasm cannot break.

Question 4: What infrastructural and technical challenges does your organization face in implementing AI-powered HR systems?

Table 4.6: Theme 4: Infrastructural and Technical Deficiencies

Respondents (Phase 1: Familiarization)	Initial Code (Phase 2: Generating Codes)	Authentic Data Extract (Phase 2: Raw Data)	Re-Coded As (Phases 3–4: Searching & Reviewing)	Final Theme (Phase 5: Defining & Naming)
R3, R6, R8	Data infrastructure gaps	"Our HR data is fragmented into Excel spreadsheets and manual records. Clean data, as required by AI, is non-existent."	Data readiness deficit	Infrastructural and Technical Deficiencies
R1, R9, R12	AI literacy shortage	"A vast majority of our HR staff do not know how to handle sophisticated HRIS, forget about AI."	Capability gap	
R5, R14	Integration challenges	"The old payroll and HRIS systems of ours would need a lot of investment before being able to	System incompatibility	

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

Respondents (Phase 1: Familiarization)	Initial Code (Phase 2: Generating Codes)	Authentic Data Extract (Phase 2: Raw Data)	Re-Coded As (Phases 3–4: Searching & Reviewing)	Final Theme (Phase 5: Defining & Naming)
		support AI integration."		
R7, R15	Cost prohibitiveness	"This technology is available at an exorbitant price tag that suits multinational corporations, not small to medium companies in Pakistan."	Economic barrier	

Results

Resistance to adoption emerged from technical and infrastructural deficiencies which created a separate group of barriers that strengthened resistance. The familiarization phase showed a major data quality issue because personnel mentioned data quality problems and system limitations and high costs and skill shortages as major difficulties which affected multiple sectors. The Phase 2 coding process generated four different codes which included data readiness deficit capability gap system incompatibility and economic barrier. The Phase 3 mapping process organized these codes into a unified cluster which represented the necessary requirements for AI-HRM adoption that Pakistani organizations fail to meet. The Phase 4 review process demonstrated internal consistency while the team distinguished itself from the cultural incompatibility theme through external differentiation. The Infrastructural and Technical Deficiencies theme describes how resistance exists in numerous Pakistani organizations because of actual technical readiness which organizations must solve before they can start adoption.

Question 5: How compatible do you feel AI-powered HRM tools are with the cultural and relational dimensions of HR practice in Pakistan?

Table 4.7: Theme 5: Cultural and Relational Incompatibility

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

Respondents (Phase 1: Familiarization)	Initial Code (Phase 2: Generating Codes)	Authentic Data Extract (Phase 2: Raw Data)	Re-Coded As (Phases 3–4: Searching & Reviewing)	Final Theme (Phase 5: Defining & Naming)
R4, R7, R11	Relationality of HR	"The HR in Pakistan is very personal. We want to talk to someone when there is an issue; we do not want to hear from a chatbot."	Human-centered HR expectation	Cultural and Relational Incompatibility
R2, R13	Wasta culture	"Our promotions depend on relationships and referrals. There is no way for AI to handle that situation."	Informal influence structures	
R6, R14	Religious and ethical filters	"Certain aspects of AI such as behavioral tracking seem intrusive and run counter to our principles of respect and dignity."	Value misalignment	
R8, R15	Language and context	"An AI tool developed in English cannot	Linguistic localization gap	

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

Respondents (Phase 1: Familiarization)	Initial Code (Phase 2: Generating Codes)	Authentic Data Extract (Phase 2: Raw Data)	Re-Coded As (Phases 3–4: Searching & Reviewing)	Final Theme (Phase 5: Defining & Naming)
		understand our language in the performance appraisals."		

Results

The use of AI-HRM tools in Pakistani organizations faced resistance because their cultural and relational differences created fundamental conflicts with local organizational practices. Participants used different language to describe HR practices through their understanding of personal relationships and trust and organizational dignity which they applied to their HR work while excluding technical and economic matters. The open coding process in Phase 2 produced four codes which included human-centered HR expectation informal influence structures value misalignment and linguistic localization gap. The researchers used the codes in Phase 3 to establish a theme which showed how Pakistani HR practice combined algorithmic standardization with its socially and culturally specific relationship requirements. The Phase 4 review found that this theme demonstrated resistance through a particular element which the other five themes did not capture. The final theme, Cultural and Relational Incompatibility, identifies the mismatch between the depersonalizing logic of AI-driven HRM and the deeply social, trust-based expectations of HR professionals and employees in Pakistani organizational contexts.

Question 6: What organizational strategies or interventions do you believe could effectively reduce resistance to AI adoption in HRM?

Table 4.8: Theme 6: Strategies for Overcoming Resistance

Respondents (Phase 1: Familiarization)	Initial Code (Phase 2: Generating Codes)	Authentic Data Extract (Phase 2: Raw Data)	Re-Coded As (Phases 3–4: Searching & Reviewing)	Final Theme (Phase 5: Defining & Naming)
R1, R9, R15	Leadership advocacy	"If the CEO promotes AI as a technology that	Senior leadership sponsorship	Strategies for Overcoming AI

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

Respondents (Phase 1: Familiarization)	Initial Code (Phase 2: Generating Codes)	Authentic Data Extract (Phase 2: Raw Data)	Re-Coded As (Phases 3–4: Searching & Reviewing)	Final Theme (Phase 5: Defining & Naming)
		enhances HR rather than replaces HR, then the resistance will drop drastically."		Adoption Resistance
R3, R6, R8	Capacity building	"There must be proper AI training programs in Pakistan for HR staff. Training must start from scratch. Not just a day's training."	Sustained training investment	
R4, R7, R12	Transparent communication	"The employees need to be aware of when and where AI will be utilized. It creates trust."	Communication-driven trust	
R2, R11, R13	Phased adoption	"Begin with automating mundane activities. Allow the people to	Incremental implementation	

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

Respondents (Phase 1: Familiarization)	Initial Code (Phase 2: Generating Codes)	Authentic Data Extract (Phase 2: Raw Data)	Re-Coded As (Phases 3–4: Searching & Reviewing)	Final Theme (Phase 5: Defining & Naming)
		see the benefits of AI. Later, use AI in HR-related tasks."		
R5, R10, R14	Local customization	"AI technologies must be localized according to Pakistani culture and language."	Contextual localization	

Results

Participants offered a range of organizationally grounded strategies for mitigating AI adoption resistance. The analysis of these transcripts showed that participants moved from explaining obstacles to providing solutions when they received direct questions which resulted in high-quality practical information for this theme. The open coding process in Phase 2 identified five distinct mitigation codes which included senior leadership sponsorship and sustained training investment and communication-driven trust and incremental implementation and contextual localization. The researchers used the codes in Phase 3 to establish a constructive counter-theme which addressed the five primary resistance themes that had been identified in earlier research. The Phase 4 review found that each code created a separate strategic area which resulted in a unified theme that could be used for practical purposes. The final theme, Strategies for Overcoming AI Adoption Resistance, provides a multi-level intervention roadmap grounded in the lived experiences of Pakistani HR professionals and directly responsive to the specific barriers surfaced in Themes 1 through 5.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The study aimed to understand how Pakistani organizations face challenges in implementing AI technology for their HRM operations through an examination of existing obstacles and their underlying causes and operational characteristics. Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with fifteen HR professionals and organizational leaders from various sectors revealed six interrelated themes which included fear of job displacement and distrust of algorithmic decision-making and hierarchical culture and

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

leadership ambivalence and infrastructural and technical deficiencies and cultural and relational incompatibility and strategies for overcoming resistance. The themes in this study offer an extensive explanation about the difficulties Pakistani organizations encounter when trying to implement AI-HRM technologies.

The findings related to fear of losing one's job to automation technology coincide with international research which has found that human resource managers suffer from significant anxiety regarding the impact of automation on their career prospects (Tambe et al., 2019; Ekuma, 2024). In the case of Pakistan, there are certain distinguishing features, such as the professional dedication of experienced HR managers and the job insecurity felt by junior HR personnel due to the threat of being substituted by automation technology. The study findings show that firms ought to adopt various strategies depending on the organizational hierarchy level of their personnel since experienced professionals need to be protected in their positions while young HR professionals need accurate information about how AI can benefit HR functions without replacing socializing activities.

Distrust towards algorithms originates from two distinct reasons, which include world-wide issues related to lack of transparency in AI systems and local issues regarding the applicability of Western-trained models for Pakistani organizations. Bandara (2025) has stated that the existence of algorithmic bias in HRM processes of AI systems results in lower trust levels among employees as well as perceptions of organizational injustices that mirror the fears raised by the participants in this research study. According to Kelan (2024), AI systems which have been trained using unrepresentative data result in an issue of systemic exclusion when it comes to hiring and talent management through their algorithmic inclusion mechanisms. This situation requires organizations to establish both AI system explanation requirements and organizational responsibility guidelines.

Hierarchical culture and leadership ambiguity create a persistent resistance to change because organizations need authority structures to deal with technological advancements (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Senior executives in Pakistani organizations which operate under strict top-down decision systems create a situation where they refuse to support AI adoption, which leads to organizational inertia that no HR worker enthusiasm can change. Golgeci et al., (2025) process framework which they developed to deal with AI resistance shows that senior leadership sponsorship presents one of the strongest factors which helps organizations achieve their AI readiness goals. The organization should establish structured AI leadership literacy programs which enable leaders to develop their capacity to achieve industry standards through standardized usage of AI leadership educational programs.

Moreover, the aforementioned technical and infrastructural limitations are further exacerbated by the general state of digital readiness that is prevalent throughout Pakistan. According to the National AI Policy of Pakistan (2025) less than 10 percent of computing and IT workers possess the necessary skills to operate AI technology. The research shows which skills organizations need to develop before they can start their AI implementation plans. As stated by Madanchian and Taherdoost (2025) there are three major challenges HRM algorithm implementation faces which include data

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

security concerns and high integration costs and the absence of digital skills that require ongoing AI education. Lastly, the issue of incompatibility between the culture of Pakistani HR professionals and their relationships with co-workers on one hand and the standardized nature of AI systems on the other is arguably the most uniquely Pakistani topic of discussion, and it provides insight into the difficulties that exist for such implementation. Indeed, Shaikh et al., (2025) highlight the role of organization culture in AI implementation as one of the key moderators.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it has found that Pakistani organizations use various psychological fears and cultural values and structural conditions and technical limitations to create multiple barriers for AI technology implementation in their HR management systems. The study shows that technological determinism fails to explain why people continue to resist AI adoption in different cultural and institutional contexts. Pakistan needs a total change management process for AI-HRM integration that simultaneously handles individual fears and builds organizational technical capacity and secures leadership commitment and develops culturally adapted AI solutions and establishes transparent governance frameworks for algorithmic decision-making. The study uses qualitative evidence to establish dynamic elements which enable researchers to study AI adoption in HRM according to specific local contexts.

Study Contributions

The study develops new theoretical and practical knowledge about AI adoption in HRM development through its study of AI adoption in HRM. The study creates a new AI adoption framework which shows how cultural and institutional factors shape AI adoption in HRM systems specifically for developing countries. The study shows how relational incompatibility works as a separate resistance element which needs further development for future research. The findings show HR practitioners and organizational leaders and technology vendors and policymakers how to expand AI-HRM use in Pakistan. The six-theme resistance model gives organizations a way to evaluate their AI readiness through its assessment framework which combines with participant-created mitigation strategies that show specific steps needed for adoption interventions.

Limitations

The study results become less applicable because of multiple limitations. The study needed fifteen participants to achieve qualitative depth but this limit prevents any claims about statistical representativeness. The study findings show HR dynamics which exist in major Pakistani cities through research conducted in formal registered organizations but this data does not apply to HR situations found in smaller informal enterprises or rural organizational contexts. The study can create interpretive bias through both participants and researchers because qualitative research uses this interpretation method but member-checking and reflexive journaling help reduce this bias risk. The study uses a cross-sectional design to see how people feel about AI

Volume 5 Issue No 2 (2026)
Online ISSN: 3006-2047
Print ISSN: 3006-2039

adoption at one moment which prevents researchers from understanding how resistance changes with increasing AI-HRM tool usage.

Future Recommendations

The results of the study require multiple research paths which will lead to further development work. Organizations must conduct longitudinal qualitative studies to observe how their employees resist AI-HRM tool implementation throughout their operational processes. The research design which combines survey data for resistance measurement with qualitative data to deliver detailed analysis will enhance research generalizability while boosting its predictive capacity about future outcomes. The cross-national research will examine AI-HRM adoption between Pakistan and comparable South Asian and Middle Eastern countries to determine whether the identified cultural obstacles function as localized phenomena or as broader regional trends. The intervention studies will assess change management effectiveness through their evaluation of AI literacy training and leadership advocacy programs and their evaluation of phased implementation models to reduce resistance against new technology.

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